Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Jeffrey A. Keshen. *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada's Second World War.* Studies in Canadian Military History Series. Vancouver, Toronto: UBC Press in Association with the Canadian War Museum, 2004. Pp. 389.

Was the Second World War a "good war" or a "bad war" for Canada? In his exhaustively researched, fully documented, and splendidly illustrated book entitled *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, Jeffrey Keshen convinces the reader that it was a "not-so-good war," or at most something *approaching* a "good war."

Inspired by the historical writings of British and American historians who have studied the social history of the Second World War, Keshen reveals the complexity of wartime society at home and on the front. Yes, there was a prevailing sense of sacrifice and idealism. Still, beyond this nobility of purpose, he finds stresses and strains created by rationing, workplace tensions, housing shortages, shifting gender roles, changes in family life, overseas experiences, and peacetime rehabilitation. Indeed, he regards the war as "a social accelerator quickly thrusting people into situations that boldly challenged their moral and social conventions," and he paints a graphic picture of hoarding, scamming, profiteering, black markets, strikes, "(im)moral matters," working women, "women warriors," juvenile delinquency, and difficult and frequently painful post-war readjustment. The responses of Canadians were both progressive and socially conservative, and from this mix of "patriotic" and "problematic" reactions came "major legacies in law, society, and culture that echo to this very day."

"How can this period have both sides?" Keshen asks. Perhaps the answer is a rather modest one: that's life! After all, history is no tidier than life itself, and the stories of those who endured the wretched conflict that was the Second World War may have been more complicated than usual. My sense is that, if you looked at one extended wartime family, you would have found saints, sinners, and soldiers in its midst. For example, it was not unusual to find a grandmother pressing her son-in-law, a Wartime Prices and Trade Board employee, for extra brown sugar and butter for the Christmas shortbread, all the while tending her victory garden, knitting socks, buying Victory Bonds, and supporting the salvage corps. Her two sons, both in uniform, saw more action in their messes than on the front. Sadly, another son-in-law was shot down over Holland on a Bomber Command mission; her widowed daughter received government support for herself and her young son and in the 1950s returned to teaching school. A daughter-in-law served in the air force

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but after the war raised four sons in a Veterans Land Act house. Yet another son-in-law was left to work twelve-hour days, six days a week when his apprentices enlisted in the navy. Two daughters and their families shared a house. Her brother's trade union won collective bargaining rights under PC1003, and her grandchildren received the baby bonus. In 1946, everyone celebrated with a bottle of champagne on the occasion of the first Christmas together since the outbreak of hostilities, and the pattern of social drinking established during the war turned into widespread alcoholism for family and friends a couple of decades later. Is it possible to separate saintliness, sinning, and soldiering when one family, or even one member of a family, might embody all three attributes?

Without doubt, "problematic" issues existed in Canada before 1939 and after 1945. They were not likely to disappear in wartime; more likely, conditions during the war animated and even aggravated them. As well, what seemed like self-interest to some was a just cause for many others: working people at home wanted the same social justice that soldiers fought for overseas. It is wise to remember that strikers who engaged in the decades-old struggle for union recognition would always be sinners in the minds of some Canadians. Moreover, "problematic" conditions during the war often stimulated long-time reform movements, particularly the drive for adequate, affordable housing. Housing activists pointed to the sins of unscrupulous landlords, one of many wartime complaints that Keshen documents, to put pressure on the federal government to create post-war programs for veterans' rental housing, public housing, and market housing across the country. Knowing the long-term history of some issues can therefore cause us to adjust our assessments of wartime saintliness and sinning.

As Keshen is quick to point out, the Second World War has had a better press than the Great War. The death toll was actually greater in the Second World War because the war lasted longer, and, as he says, we do not have the same miserable images of death in the mud and the trenches of Europe from this war that we do for the First World War. A historian of science might add that the advances in medicine and pharmacology, such as burn treatment and antibiotic drugs, made an enormous difference in limiting mortality and lessening injury. Probably one of the greatest legacies of the Second World War was that after 1945 those advances were made available to all Canadians.

Understandably, Keshen did not propose to treat in complete detail the legacies of the Second World War. Thus, he has introduced a whole new field of discussion for himself and other social historians. One area of study open to him, or to specialists in the history of children and in the history of culture, is the impact of the war on Canadian youngsters who lived through it or were born during and after it. What is the connection between the idealistic and problematic wartime years and the generation that questioned Canadian and even

global society in the 1960s, 1970s, and beyond? Singular individuals such as David Suzuki and Stephen Lewis, both depression-era babies, come readily to mind, as do wartime babies and boomers, including Margaret Atwood, Bruce Cockburn, Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell, and Neil Young. Perhaps this legacy of childhood experience would provide a different perspective about whether the Second World War was a good, bad, or not-so-good war for Canada.

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Yves Tremblay, Roch Legault et Jean Lamarre (dir.). *L'éducation et les militaires canadiens*. Montréal, Athéna Éditions, 2004, 263 pages.

Dans l'introduction, l'un des auteurs remarque que « l'étude de l'éducation militaire jouit d'une vague de popularité ». C'est vrai, mais celle-ci demeure peu développée si on la compare à d'autres champs de la sociologie et de l'histoire militaires. À cet égard, cette publication qui traite essentiellement de l'éducation des militaires canadiens mérite l'attention.

L'ouvrage est divisé en cinq volets : les débuts de l'éducation militaire, l'éducation militaire au Canada depuis le Régime français, les formations offertes aux officiers supérieurs, l'éducation militaire et la révolution de l'information et, enfin, la culture et l'éducation militaire dans l'avenir. En tout, dix-sept contributions de Canadiens et d'étrangers qui cherchent à offrir un panorama général et diversifié sur la question. Or, si l'idée est louable, il n'est pas sûr que la profondeur de certains articles et la cohérence de l'ensemble permettent d'atteindre cet objectif.

La première partie, qui traite des débuts de l'éducation militaire, offre un texte intitulé *L'enseignement supérieur au Québec, XIX^e^ et XX^e^ siècles*. Son auteur trace un aperçu complet et intéressant de cette question mais n'aborde pas, ce qui est dommage, la question de l'éducation militaire. On a la fâcheuse impression que le texte se perd un peu dans l'ensemble. L'article suivant établit des liens et des parallélismes entre l'instruction militaire et civile en France, de la Troisième République à aujourd'hui. L'auteur fait ressortir les défis de l'une et de l'autre et souligne l'utilité sociale, comme lieu de savoir-faire et de pédagogie, du service militaire universel. Il affirme même qu'« en matière de pédagogie, l'armée n'a rien à envier à l'éducation